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- Ms. Carrie Antal, USAID Head of Food Security and Disaster Assistance in Madagascar

USAID MADAGASCAR: RESPONDING TO THE ENAWO DISASTER

On Wednesday, March 8th the powerful cyclone Enawo drove straight through the heart of Madagascar, bringing torrential rains and howling winds up to 300 km/hour to batter the island nation. Heavy and constant rains unleashed widespread flooding as the storm carved a trail south along the spine of the island.

In Brickaville, a large town on the edge of the eastern rainforest, the rivers rose so rapidly that people had to abandon their homes in the midst of the storm to flee to higher ground. Though there were no deaths in Brickaville, Cyclone Enawo exacted a heavy toll: over 650 homes were totally destroyed and hundreds of families have been forced to seek shelter in temporary centers.

Brickaville is home to a food warehouse used by Catholic Relief Services as part of a USAID funded food security project called Fararano, which works along the east coast as well as the southwest of Madagascar. Having the food warehouse on location allowed Catholic Relief Services to respond quickly and provide food to those in need. 25 tonnes of food were used to feed 800 families, cast out of their homes by the cyclone, for a month. Soon after, USAID provided another 142 tonnes of food to feed thousands of people more.

The food supplies included rice, beans and oil, and were also brought to people in remote, hard-to-reach communities, up to 50 kilometers away. Some of the emergency supplies were also specifically designated to help pregnant and lactating mothers and young children.

“Unfortunately Madagascar is an island that is accustomed to bearing the brunt of these ferocious storms and extreme weather, like the serious drought that the south of Madagascar has been enduring for the past three years,” said Carrie Antal, head of USAID’s Food Security and Disaster Assistance Office in Madagascar. “Communities, the government of Madagascar and development partners like USAID have to stand ready to respond, and we never know which communities will be hardest hit. This is a case where we have been able to respond very quickly and start helping people just days after the storm.”